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# ***LABOUR ORGANISER***

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**EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE C.L.P.**—Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary-Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms obtainable from **Mr. J. Macgowan, 2 Nethermain Road, Milngavie, Dunbartonshire**, to whom they must be returned not later than Tuesday, 29th March, 1955.

**WYCOMBE C.L.P.**—This important marginal constituency requires experienced full-time Secretary-Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with National Agreement. House available. Application forms from: **Mr. G. H. H. Cooper, 190 Hughenden Road, High Wycombe, Bucks.**, to whom they should be returned not later than 28th March, 1955.

**WEMBLEY SOUTH C.L.P.**—Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary-Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with National Agreement. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretary, **Mr. W. Foren, Labour Hall, Union Road, Wembley, Middlesex**, and must be returned not later than 17th May, 1955.

**BARRY C.L.P.**—Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary-Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms are obtainable from **The Secretary, 109 High Street, Barry, Glam.**, to whom they should be returned not later than 31st March, 1955.

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# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

EDITOR: A. L. WILLIAMS

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## Preparing the way

SINCE the "Forward to Victory" campaign was launched in January, some 30 conferences and 25 demonstrations have been organised through the Party regional offices.

Speakers, chiefly members of the National Executive Committee, were placed at the disposal of the Regional Organisers in order that arrangements could be made to enable all the constituency parties to send delegates to one or more conferences in their particular region.

There can be no doubt as to the value of these conferences. Their purpose is the vitally important one of giving authentic, detailed information to the delegates on the major items of policy which are outlined in *Challenge to Britain* and of clarifying any doubts there may be about it.

In other words, delegates to the conferences are briefed on what to say in the course of propaganda in their own constituencies and on how to say it so as to command public support.

### POLICY

*Challenge to Britain* is a statement of policy which was approved by the Annual Conference; it is accepted by all sections of the Party; and it is, moreover, especially in the sections which deal with economic policy and social services, a document of outstanding historical importance.

The demonstrations, which are an important part of the campaign, are designed to bring *Challenge to Britain* to

the attention of the public, both as a statement of the principles to be followed by the next Labour Government and as a key to the solution of present evils.

Apart altogether from the regional conferences and demonstrations, there are the one-day and weekend schools, which have been held with success in some areas, and there are the many local meetings which constituency parties, using their M.P.s or prospective Parliamentary Candidates, have arranged.

### CONFERENCES

Here one should say that it was from the first made clear, and it remains essential, that every constituency party should, on its own initiative, play a part in the National campaign by arranging a series of platform activities which locally will take the Party FORWARD TO VICTORY.

Such activities must continue until the General Election occurs, as it must sometime within the next eighteen months and, according to all the signs, long before that period ends.

Information so far to hand shows that many of the conferences have been notably successful. It is perhaps to be expected that in view of the esteem in which he is held and of the unique position he occupies, the largest conference should have been addressed by Mr. Attlee, whose audience at Newcastle on February 19th totalled 1,900 persons.

But other conferences, too, have been highly successful, attracting numbers of keen delegates to discuss policy with other speakers. To mention only a few, good conferences have been addressed by Mr. Mikardo in Bristol, by Mr. Gaitskell in Hull, by Miss Herbison in Aberdeen and

by Mr. Greenwood in Wimbledon.

Moreover, the spirit of the delegates has in most cases been good; they have been people who, not withstanding the difficulties of the moment, look with confidence to the future.

Not all the 30 conferences so far held have been as good as they could have been. A number have been poorly attended and, it would seem, poorly organised. Unless in these cases there have been defects of organisation it is difficult to account for the fact that other conferences of the same type and in similar districts have been well-attended.

It is not sufficiently understood, although it has been said many times in the *Labour Organiser* and elsewhere, that conferences and meetings must be, in the most positive sense of the word, ORGANISED.

The practice of sending blocks of credentials to local secretaries for distribution to delegates is not a good one. The organiser of a conference should have the names and addresses of delegates sent to him and should himself send the credentials direct to the delegates.

Just as important is the need for the organiser to ensure personally that every branch (Labour Party, Trade Union, Co-operative) entitled to send delegates to a conference actually and seriously considers doing so. He must brief the secretary of each branch on getting the attention of the branch meeting and the appointment of delegates.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

Some twenty-five demonstrations have up-to-date been held under regional auspices. Here also the outstanding event was a demonstration—the Tees-side demonstration—addressed by Mr. Attlee on February 20th. Others of high value were in Swansea (Mr. Harold Wilson), in Barnsley (Mr. Gaitskell), in Taunton (Mr. Mikardo).

Slackness in organisation is apparent in the failure to secure audiences for several well-known speakers in marginal constituencies or large centres of population where such speakers should have created a stir.

We are obliged to stress once again that if a demonstration is to be taken seriously, every Party member must be personally urged to attend, the whole district within a reasonable range of the hall must be saturated with printed advertisement

(chiefly handbills and press notices), and, *most vital of all*, there must be an *actual canvass* a few days before the meeting.

Although in bad weather audiences are bound to slump, there is evidence that in the past month the explanation of poor attendances has in many cases lain partly in lack of sustained organisation.

## TELEVISION

One of the really arresting events during the first phase of the *Forward to Victory* campaign was the television programme of which Miss Elaine Burton, M.P., had charge. This dealt in a convincing manner with a topic of wide interest. There will be other television programmes, including the one to be taken by Herbert Morrison and a group of journalists on March 15th.

It would be well if in each district the members of the Party could bring to their Party meetings their knowledge of the reactions of the electors to these programmes; points of particular interest could become topics for useful and interesting discussion.

We are anxious to know precisely how TV can best aid our propaganda and what educational activities are most needed to intensify or correct its influence.

No Party officer or, indeed, active member should forget the series of leaflets (specially prepared for the "Forward to Victory" campaign) which is available from the Publications Department. We know that in many places with scattered populations the regular distribution of leaflets is more effective than a whole series of ragged meetings.

And just because of the ease of distribution, many densely populated districts should regularly have leaflets. It is to be hoped that a large number of parties in marginal constituencies will begin and maintain leaflet distribution until the General Election. The regular delivery, week by week, or even month by month, will have its effect.

Nobody must miss the excellent and very cheap broadsheet which has recently been issued. This is factual, inspiring, pictorial, amusing, and in every sense a telling paper. It contains, for example, a talk on fundamentals by Mr. Attlee and a strikingly clear one-page version of *Challenge to Britain*. Obviously this is a sheet which should be distributed in hundreds of thousands, for it is applicable to local and national elections.



## Structure of the Parties

HOW very few Constituency and Local Labour Parties have done anything about setting up a small library; and yet, how valuable such a library could be to every Party in the land.

This reflection, not by any means a new one, is revived by the appearance of R. T. McKenzie's *British Political Parties*.

Thirty bob is a lot of money to a poor man, but what I couldn't afford the home town could, so as soon as I saw advance notices of this book I called upon the Public Library Committee to buy it. That is how I came to be reading it within three days of its publication.

To all who are concerned with politics in any aspects, this is a book of great importance. It had a remarkably 'good press', and will be available in every public library, but that is not enough. It should at least be in the possession of every Labour Party, and readily to hand for reference by every live Party member.

There are six hundred large pages for careful reading, and not a dull one among them. That alone makes the book a monument of good writing. The proof-reading was not perfect, but then, neither is it in the *Labour Organiser*.

In the construction of his book the author has investigated an enormous mass of official records and books by other writers, and has held discussions with political leaders and party officers and workers on every floor from the basement to the solarium. Of himself, he asserts nothing. For every point, or conclusion, he cites authority; and where the authority appears open to question or doubt he questions or doubts with a penetrating sagacity.

Mr. McKenzie is a young man and, for one reason only, this is a pity. Because of his age, his personal contact with the personages of the Labour Party (and equally of the Conservative Party) has been limited to the past ten years. The eroding process of time has denied him personal knowledge of the great majority of those who laid the foundations and put

in the footings of the Party, and helped to shape the building before they ceased work forever.

His quotations from other writers are all carefully made, and all are directly for the purposes of his book. No one can justifiably take him to task for this. All the same, it must be said that certain extracts from the recently-published diaries of a rather waspish lady give a high-sniffing, hasty and unjust appraisal of a number of the leading figures of the first three decades of the Labour Party's life.

Those of us who are old enough to have known these characters will differ vigorously with the assessments of this shrewish lady. However, Mr. McKenzie never suggests that he agrees with her. It does appear, though, that if a man has any desire to be treated fairly in history he must be even more careful in the selection of his biographer than of his parents.

All that, however, is by the way. What is most important is that everyone who reads this book with the care that it deserves will finish up knowing more about the Labour Party than he has ever known before. Moreover, he will know more about the Conservative Party than he has ever known before.

From both angles, therefore, this book is a *must* in a Labour library. We give a lot of thought to building our Party better and better. We also spend a lot of time talking or wrangling with our political opponents. When we tell them in our blunt working-class fashion what a rotten Party theirs is it is very helpful to be able to tell them exactly where the rottenness lies. Although Mr. McKenzie gives no reason to suspect he is a Party man, you will find a lot of useful ammunition in the first 290 pages of his book; and from the remainder you will get a wider understanding of the Labour Party.

# It isn't then so difficult

*Local Government elections necessarily involve a great deal of work, but considerable time and trouble can be avoided by working systematically through the Election time-table, completing each job step by step.*

THOSE who have little or no experience in running a local government election often feel that procedure is rather complicated and fraught with difficulties. Being anxious to do the correct thing often results in something that apparently does not matter being overlooked, or reading into something else more than is really intended.

The following points of an election time-table, taken in chronological order, might therefore be of assistance.

**Notice of Election.** This notice is usually taken for granted as it is an official notice—the first in the election time-table. It does, however, contain information as to where and when the nomination papers are to be delivered. Nominations have been lost, especially in rural areas, as a result of not checking the place for delivery.

The date of Notice of Election, which is required on the nomination paper, is also given.

**Nomination of Candidate.** In county, borough and urban district elections, each nomination paper must be subscribed by two electors as proposer and seconder together with eight others as assenters. In rural and parish elections only a proposer and seconder is required. All must be entered in the Register of Electors for that particular electoral area.

No elector can sign more than one nomination paper for the same candidate, nor more nomination papers than there are vacancies. This means that in the case of one vacancy only one nomination paper can be signed, but if there are six vacancies, six different nomination papers could be signed. As we advise the sending in of three nomination papers for each candidate, care must be taken to comply with this requirement. Where an elector does subscribe to more than that laid down, the first to be delivered is accepted and the others are invalid.

**Filling in Nomination Papers.** The top section of the nomination paper needs immediate attention and no signatures should be added until this has been completed.

The entry of the ward or borough is quite easy but mistakes often arise by entering the date of election instead of date of Notice of Election.

The name of the candidate—surname first and with other names *in full* (initials will not do), must be entered. The address must be where he resides and not a business or 'accommodation' address. The description means his employment or occupation. Where possible these details should be typed in for sake of clarity.

Care should be taken to ensure that nomination papers are correctly filled in, for it is upon this the Returning Officer has to make his decision.

In case of doubt arising over the name or description of the candidate, consult the R.O. beforehand and, if necessary, ask him to prepare a nomination paper for signature.

So as to make certain that nothing can go wrong with the nomination paper, see that each signature contains one full christian name—for instance, Leonard G. Sims. Do not rely on an initial as this can disqualify. The electoral number and Polling District letter must, of course, also be included.

## Candidate's Consent to Nomination.

This consent form, which must be signed by the candidate and witnessed, can usually be obtained, with nomination papers, from the local council offices.

The form, in addition to declaring the candidate qualified to stand and be elected, also requires him to state his qualification. Where it is possible to claim more than one qualification, it should be done, especially bearing in mind the "12 months prior residence" qualification. As this completes itself before the day of election, it entitles a candidate, if elected, to continue to hold office even if he ceases to be a registered elector or to own land.



**Delivery of Nomination Papers.** The delivery of nomination papers in local government elections is not so formal as that for parliamentary elections. Nevertheless care should be taken to ensure they are delivered to the correct place and within the prescribed time.

If any doubt arises at the place appointed in a rural area, notify the R.O. that the papers have been delivered there as required on the Notice of Election, and give day and time of delivery.

**Decision on Nomination Papers.** If the nomination papers have been correctly filled in and delivered with the candidate's consent form, there is little chance of the R.O. rejecting them. The R.O. cannot decide on the qualification of the candidate. His powers are confined to satisfying himself that they are in order. He can only declare a nomination paper invalid on the following grounds:

- (a) that the particulars of the candidate, or the parties subscribing the paper are not as required by law, and
- (b) that the paper is not subscribed as so required.

Care then in the first place can ensure nomination.

**Application for the extension of Polling hours.** The hours of poll in county and borough elections are from 8 a.m. till 8 p.m. In the case of urban districts it is 8 a.m. till 8 p.m. and in rural and parish elections noon till 8 p.m. unless varied by an order made by the County Council. It is always advisable to check on the times so as to avoid mistakes.

In all cases, however, it is possible to make application for an extension until 10 p.m. The application, made by candidates must be equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, e.g. three vacancies, three applications.

**Notice of Appointment of Election Agent.** In all local government elections except parish, there is provision for the appointment of an election agent. Failure to appoint results in the candidate being deemed to be his own election agent.

The notice of the appointment has to be sent to the Clerk of the Council for which the election is held. In the case of county council elections, it is usual to appoint a Deputy Returning Officer, and it is suggested that as well as notifying the Clerk of the County Council, a copy is sent to the Deputy R.O. It is best to

deliver the latter with the nomination papers, consent form and application for extension of polling hours. Do not wait until the last day.

**Appointment of Polling and Counting Agents.** The appointment of polling agents is a matter that must be decided locally in light of the circumstances. In urban, rural and parish council elections the number permitted each polling station is limited and the R.O. will notify that number.

The number of counting agents is also decided upon by the R.O. In county, borough and urban elections this is done by dividing the number of clerks by the number of candidates. In rural and parish elections the R.O. decides on the number for each candidate.

**The Poll.** The candidate and election agent, provided they have signed the declaration of secrecy, can enter polling stations and so satisfy themselves that everything is in order.

Polling agents, if appointed, can only attend the station to which they have been appointed, and, while it is in order to take numbers inside the polling station, it is not possible to bring the numbers out.

**The Count.** The candidates, their wives or husbands, the election agents, and the counting agents are permitted to be present at the count. The candidate has every right to do any act permitted his counting agent. There is no specific arrangement for the election agent to do this but there is a traditional right which is usually accepted. If there is any doubt, the best thing to do is for the election agent to be appointed a counting agent.

**Recount.** On the completion of the count the candidate or election agent ask for a recount or a further recount if considered to be desirable. The decision, however, rests with the R.O.

In the event of equality of votes it has now been laid down that the decision must be made by the lot: the nature of which is not specified.

These, briefly, are the main provisions of the time-table. Our 'Reminders' issued in February cover other aspects of the campaign. A copy can be obtained by writing to the National Agent's Department and quoting reference NAD 6/2/55.

# Are we able to pick and choose?

I HAVE read with interest the contribution made by Mr. Alfred Richman in the February issue of *Labour Organiser*.

It is not in my nature to be hypercritical of suggestions and hints given by comrades who are undoubtedly sincere in their beliefs, and having worked with Alfred Richman of the *Daily Herald*, I know that his contribution under the heading, 'Canvassing? Watch your Dress', was written in a sincere and helpful vein.

However, as with many people who aim for perfection and put forward theories and ideas, which are apparently sound, Alfred Richman neglects to recognise the facts of the case.

It is undoubtedly true that canvassing, when done by people who are unkempt in their appearance, may possibly have a detrimental effect on the canvass returns. I say may, because there can be no true assessment of any such damage done. I would also admit willingly that we should wherever possible make our teams up of those people who are most suited to the particular area which they are canvassing, and the basis of the Labour Party is sufficiently broad, I am sure, to enable us to build up such selected teams of canvassers.

Experience in the last two by-elections has taught me, unfortunately, that such hopes and dreams are as yet far from achievement.

As a full-time organiser in both the West Derby and the Stockport by-elections, I found, and this is not unusual, a lack of support in those important days of the campaign which are devoted mainly to canvassing. Consequently, in common with my fellow organisers in both these campaigns, I was compelled to use any material which was available for the canvass.

It is true that we did have occasion during one of the campaigns to carefully lose one volunteer because of the nature of his appearance, but this was an isolated case, and in general we accepted anyone who would volunteer their services.

No, Mr. Editor, whilst I agree with Mr. Richman that in theory we should have

selected canvassers of well-dressed people particularly suited to the areas to which they are directed, in actual fact our problem is not dressing the canvassers, but finding them!

If we can devise some system of arousing interest amongst our own active members we shall contribute much more towards the winning of an election than by the manner suggested by Alfred Richman.

I know for a fact that if I had suggested to those handful of workers whom I had secured during either of these by-elections, that they should change their apparel in order to meet the requirements of the area, I should have probably had an even smaller group of loyal workers.

R. DILLON

### Job for a Specialist

WHILE thanking Arthur Tadman for his comments on my article, 'Publicity Man: By-election Must', I would point out that he appears to have missed my main point.

I agree that the real reason for apathy in so many by-elections is that there is no doubt about the election result. But judging from the percentage swing away from Labour in many recent campaigns, apathy does not appear to attack the Tories to the same extent!

However, it was in order to arouse the interest of Labour supporters that I advocated special attention to publicity. I agree—who wouldn't?—that the best approach is by the personal and direct contact to our supporters.

But let us cut out the wishful thinking and face facts. It is precisely in the non-marginal seats that we experience a shortage of canvassers. It is impossible with the willing but small band of canvassers available to call on even a reasonable proportion of Labour, 'outs' and 'doubts'.

We should, therefore, make some effort to remedy our deficiencies and I am suggesting that a good publicity campaign would not only reach the people we do



not contact, but also have a good effect on the ones we do. Incidentally, if Arthur Tadman thinks that a fortnight is too short a period for a publicity campaign to make itself felt, I believe, on the other hand, that it is too short a period to complete his alternative of a really comprehensive canvass.

I am surprised to note that Arthur Tadman has fallen victim to Tory propaganda. In qualifying his statement that a Publicity Officer would be unlikely to infuse much life into a short campaign if the result is a foregone conclusion, he adds, "and there is no really major issue at stake."

Surely there is always a major issue at stake in our election campaigns. It is the issue of Socialism versus Capitalism.

In another part of his comments, Arthur Tadman—deprecating spectacle—notes that it tends to overshadow the issues at stake. So perhaps he does think that there is a difference between us and the Tories after all. I would like to see our publicity going a good deal further in making this plain to the electorate.

Regarding the supposed 'comfort' of staff jobs in the Central Committee Rooms, come to the Southern Region, Mr. Tadman. It will bring you up to date for it is obviously a long time since you visited a by-election, let alone worked in one.

Come to the Southern Region and I will

show you some of the draughty lean-to sheds, ex-coal offices, basements and attics that we have used as Central Committee Rooms—and been jolly glad to get them, too.

I do not know where the idea comes from that we have too many colonels participating in by-election campaigns. In our last campaign we had an Election Agent who was his own Publicity Officer and Meetings Officer, myself as the Woman Organiser, Canvass Officer and Transport Officer, a shorthand typist, and three full-time Agents who between them endeavoured to organise 59 polling districts.

From my four years in H.M. Forces, I had yet to meet a colonel who, having completed his own work, will turn to and work with the privates on their job, but it is a common practice in by-elections.

In his article last November, Arthur Tadman drew attention to the possibility of the employment of a full-time by-election Team. I disagreed with his proposals, but I would remind him that he said, "It is becoming increasingly necessary to have specialists available to take over key positions during by-election campaigns."

I consider publicity of sufficient importance to warrant a specialist giving it his undivided attention during a by-election campaign.

MARGARET FOX

## THE SAVETIME

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# ARGUMENT ON THE DOORSTEP

by DON ALGER

WANDERING recently among the local Labour Parties of the South Bettershire constituency, I found myself caught into a canvassing team in the parish of Kitcherby.

The majority of the electors were obviously Tories, although I noticed some aggressive Liberal posters in the window of a cobbler's shop.

The Local Labour Party (which had lately been revived) had among its records a note that some years ago a canvass had shown that 25 per cent of the electors were Labour supporters. It was believed that in the past few years the proportion had risen; and it was desired not only to find the exact number of supporters but to make sure that they would vote for the Labour candidate in a County Council by-election.

The work of canvassing, inspired by visions of perfect records of the whole 5,000 electors, was to begin in good time. Later the general bombardment of the electors by leaflet and meeting would get under way. The best candidate ever would make his appeal by personal house-to-house calls and by pep talks from the corners of the roads.

Together with the votes from the more promising parts of the county council area, the votes from Kitcherby might help the candidate to a narrow victory. It will be understood that the prospect thrilled the band of canvassers who had by chance recruited me to help. I learnt afterwards that several of them had obtained really good results, getting quite an array of red ticks against the names of the electors on the register. What happened to me you shall hear.

★ ★ ★

I was prepared to find the Labour supporters few and far between on the roads I had promised to visit. A glance at the richness of the buddleias in their gardens was enough to tell me this. For some reason sumptuous buddleias do not figure in the gardens of Labour supporters. That is almost a law of nature.

Yet, so much was I braced by air of South Bettershire, so buoyed by the dream

of success at the county council by-election, that I gaily agreed to canvass these buddleia-smothered roads alone. A sheaf of red and white leaflets, a couple of pages of the register and a ten-year-old piece of card bearing the name and address of an alleged supporter, were thrust into my hand.

★ ★ ★

It was a beautiful afternoon. The buddleias smouldered in the gardens; the papers blazed between my fingers. On such an afternoon I expected a genial reception. During the first dozen calls I certainly got it. The electors who came to their doors politely took my leaflets and, nodding towards the buddleias (gorgeous mauve, purple and crimson, these flowers) explained that they took little interest in politics but usually voted Conservative.

"Glorious day."

"It surely is."

"Few friends of yours about here, I'm afraid."

After an hour of this I found I had not a single red tick on the pages of the register. It was time for the luck to change. A couple of minutes later I called at a house where I was welcomed by an exuberant Irish family, every one of whom was a socialist and a supporter of the Labour Party and, indeed, claimed to have known the author of "The Red Flag" personally.

I was invited to a tea which lasted even longer than the remnant of my second hour. Grandma, still at eighty the most vocal of the family, told over and over again from the depths of a rocking chair the wrongs of Ireland from the days of Queen Elizabeth the First to those of David Lloyd George. She even lilted her doubts about the soundness of Mr. de Valera, who, notwithstanding his patriotism had not, she said, the makings of an "Oirish Soshiallist".

At last I escaped, partly stodged and partly uplifted by tea and rhetoric. Grandma had said she had reason to believe that the gentleman in the next house but one was a Labour supporter, which the gentleman in the house between certainly was not, begorra.



I called, and was enthusiastically received. "The very man," cried the householder as I explained my purpose. "I've got a paper." He produced the paper, which proved to be a sheet covered with drawings of joints of pork and notes of their prices. He asked if I knew the price of pork in the Kitcherby, and when, being honest, I murmured a smoothing but obviously vague reply, I was treated to a tale of what really seemed gross overcharging.

The whole hog and all its particular joints in turn, together with their prices, were hurled at me. The gentleman spoke with such passion that I began uneasily to suspect that he was a new kind of sadist, a porcomaniac perhaps. But there was a purpose in the torrent of joints and prices.

My friend (if, begorra, he was a friend) wanted to know what the Labour Party proposed to do about the racket. I explained to him the Party's ideas about the marketing of meat. "But here in Kitcherby," he squalled, "what about the chap who's charging over the price in this paper on every pound of ribs he sells?"

My enquirer seemed to be awaiting a declaration that the Labour Party would order the instant arrest of the Kitcherby dealer. Apparently some rash person had led him to believe that this would be done, even when the Tories were in power. He was not interested in my account of Labour policy, nor in the apt leaflet which by chance I found among my sheaf.

He waved it away, crying, "And you are prepared to let that—rip because you're not in power?" "Not so," I said, desperately. "People shouldn't buy the pork." Fiercely he snatched the leaflet, crushed it into a ball. "Young man," he said, witheringly, "I guess you don't even belong here, let alone know the sharks and swindlers who infest the place." Like Dr. Johnson on a celebrated occasion he "roared with prodigious violence" against the dealers of Kitcherby.

I am sure he did not hear my polite but scared "Good evening", or notice my departure through his gate. Dusk had fallen and, peering intently for the right place, I blacked his name deliberately from the register.

★ ★ ★

I suppose the story has a moral, perhaps a series of morals. The only red ticks I had made after four hours among the

buddleias of Kitcherby were against the four names of the Irish family.

From the start I had been deluded by my own wisdom, thinking I knew the worst that was to be known about the political climate of the district. Indeed, my delusion had led to a careless optimism and a wanton waste of time. I should not have ignored so blithely the rule that canvassers should work in pairs so that one may support and, if necessary, extricate the other.

The solitary canvasser is predestined to waste his powers; he is the sure and certain victim of his cunning opponents. He is bound to become involved in arguments—if not about the price of pork in a place he does not know, then about some other subject which demands a weight of local knowledge and experience. All good canvassers are aware of these things, and we badly need *good* canvassers.

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MR. John Bradley was elected secretary of the Peel Park Ward Labour Party, Accrington, for the 29th successive year, at the annual meeting in January.

Mr. Bradley is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and has worked continuously for the party as ward secretary. At the meeting there were many tributes to his work, which it was stated had played no small part in the political change in the representation in the ward, which was now 100 per cent Labour.

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# More Highlights From Reports

LAST month we published some of the highlights from the half-yearly reports, and because we believe that readers do like to hear of party activity outside their own constituency, we are giving a little more space here to record some of the more interesting achievements that have been brought to our notice.

**Coventry Borough**, reports G. Hodgkinson, held a two-day Annual Bazaar in November which brought them a handsome return of about £450.

Stan Natrass, **Dorking**, expresses appreciation for the wonderful work put in by collectors in his constituency. He reports an increase of 228 members on the previous year, bringing total membership to 2,604.

The prospective candidate at **Cheltenham**, says W. Huartson, has, with the help of local councillors, carried out systematic visiting and canvassing. Taking one ward at a time, his programme for weekends usually follows this pattern: Friday evening—small ward 'Any Questions' or cottage meetings. Saturday morning and afternoon—canvassing and visiting. Saturday evening—Social event. Regular personal contact by the candidate is invaluable. In this way his constituents get to know him as a real person rather than just a name.

At **South Dorset**, too, the prospective candidate has been making ground. Two successful social functions in the nature of 'At Homes' have been held. Invitations were sent out on behalf of the candidate and his wife to Party members and friends. The first gathering at Weymouth was attended by 300, and the second, at Wool Village, was attended by 80. The candidate on both occasions gave a brief address during the evening, and these were well received.

Mr. E. Clarke says that they find these functions no more costly than public meetings. They are certainly better attended, and this, together with the good press publicity obtained, fulfils the same purpose. Similar events are planned for the future.

**Macclesfield** had nine public meetings over the latter half of the year, and the average attendance of those addressed by an M.P. was about 80. All the meetings, says Alison Brierley, received press publicity.

Miss Brierley also records the considerable amount of time and energy that was put into a Constituency Bazaar, held in December. This was a very satisfactory effort which not only secured about £150, but also served to bring together members from all parts of the constituency to work together as a team. The only disadvantage, adds Miss Brierley, was that so much time was taken up in preparation for this that routine organisation work had to be neglected for a time.

**Macclesfield Local Labour Party** distributed a questionnaire of eight controversial questions. A good proportion of these questionnaires was completed and the answers were then analysed and reported in the local Press with comments by the prospective candidate. This effort created considerable local interest and something like six week's publicity.

Sadie Fleming of **Carlisle** gives praise to the women of the movement who sponsored and ran a Bazaar which realised over £302. During 1954 Carlisle increased membership, maintained its education and propaganda work, increased representation on the City Council, and have made a very determined effort towards providing money to purchase a building for the movement.

**Woolwich Labour Party** look back with satisfaction on the progress made over the year. The Party covers two constituencies and has a total of 10,197 members. More than £2,400 in members' subscriptions, £900 from the Social Committee, £800 in affiliation fees, and £600 for the Election Fund, are the main items in their statement of accounts.

In addition, many repairs have been done to the party premises at Woolwich, and the Eltham office has been furnished with office equipment. The Women's Sections, Social Committees and the League of Youth have functioned well, and the Annual Fete was an outstanding success.



Leeds City Labour Party report a good year. At the May elections they gained a further six seats, so that they now have a majority of 24 in the City Council. Meetings there have been well attended and the December Bazaar, organised by the officers and members of the Women's Advisory Council and the Women's Sections, brought the party £306.

Westbury report that individual membership in the constituency remains the second highest for any constituency in the country. They have 3,579 men and 2,397 women. The experiment of house meetings with the prospective candidate has proved successful and these are to be continued.

The most important event in the field of propaganda during the year was 'Socialist Week', during which an intensive programme of meetings and canvassing was undertaken. This included an 'Any Questions' by a team from the Labour Parliamentary Association and local teams, open-air meetings, a C.W.S. Film Show, a public meeting addressed by Mr. James Griffiths, and numerous social activities culminating in a ball at Trowbridge. There have also been three public debates with the Tories.

Mr. Elsie Boltz of Vauxhall refers to the considerable amount of public work that is done by the party in the constituency which is taken for granted and not reflected in party membership or attendance at meetings. The Social and Free Advice Bureau was successful during 1954 in obtaining over £2,000 for constituents who came for advice on a variety of matters.

The urban district of Enfield, reports John Walton, is expected to become a 'borough' between now and the May elections. Preparations have been made for putting up 30 candidates, three in each ward, and agreement has been reached with the opposition in regard to the aldermanic seats. Labour has 17 councillors at present, six of whom would have retired this year.

These extracts, of course, tell of the successes: but not all the reports paint such a rosy picture.

Reading through them one finds constant reference to apathy and a general decline in the number of members attending committee meetings. It should be remembered, however, that a falling off of enthusiasm and a certain reluctance

on the part of some members to take an active part in local party work, reflects the normal attitude of mind between elections.

With the prospect of a General Election this year, the flagging interest will undoubtedly be roused. Now is the time to seek out those stay-at-home members who, though they may now be labelled 'apathetic', will at the first announcement of an election be imbued with enthusiasm and only too anxious to lend willing hands and feet. There are countless small tasks that can be assigned to these members, and their help will relieve the pressure on 'key' workers who can then turn their attention to the more important jobs on hand.

*Charles Knight & Co. Ltd., advise us that they will send a free supplement to all customers who already possess the third edition of 'The Law Relating to Local Elections'. The supplement brings the edition completely up to date.*

*Applications, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, should be addressed to 11-12 Bury Street, St. Mary Axe, London, E.C.3.*

## CANDIDATES

THE following were endorsed as prospective Parliamentary Candidates at the January meeting of the National Executive Committee:

Wycombe	...	...	Mr. L. R. Fletcher
Honiton	...	...	Mr. F. W. Thornton
Rochdale	...	...	Mr. J. McCann



### WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDATURES

Altrincham	and Sale	Mr. J. B. O'Hara
Wallasey	...	Mr. F. Jarvis
Newcastle	North	Mr. I. Geffen
Woking	...	Mr. W. Elliott
Croydon	North	Mr. S. Irving
Barkston Ash	...	Mr. H. V. Wiseman

# Are Hearings necessary?

by W. D. Stansfield

WHEN I attended at the office of the Electoral Registration Officer recently to hear claims and objections in connection with the compiling of the new Electors' Lists, I found that most of the cases had been allowed, or disallowed, by the Registration Officer without the necessity of a hearing. Further, I was the only agent present.

The thought came to me, is attendance at these Hearings now necessary? Most Registration Officers, for a period, anyway, employ house to house canvassers to follow up and check on Form A, and, if necessary, to collect the forms personally, or to give advice to the elector on how to complete them.

Since the reversion to the old method of compiling the Electors' Lists (instead of by Food Office registrations), my experience has been that this work has been done effectively. Over the years the number of persons left off the Register has progressively diminished.

Prior to the last war, I was agent in a county division having a large number of small villages and one fairly large town. I remember that we had not only a Revision Court (as they were then called) in the town, but four or five in the villages too, and they used to be held over two days, with sometimes over 300 claims and objections to be dealt with.

Being a Labour agent I did not possess a car, but the Town Clerk, who was also the Registration Officer, always took me along in his car—the Conservative agent following along in his own car. We used to adjourn for lunch to the village pub if there was no other suitable place in the village, and in nine cases out of ten, there wasn't. I used to look forward to those drives from one Court to another through beautiful Lancashire countryside. Alas, those days are no more.

Most of the claims or objections I made were as a result of careful canvassing, street by street, by Party members, and

information obtained during local elections. (Records were carefully compiled after each election ready for checking against the new Register.)

But to-day, as I have said, the work of compiling the Electors' Lists is done so thoroughly by the Registration Officer and his staff, that it seems to me useless to attend the Hearing—unless, of course, there are claims and objections of which you have prior knowledge.

*Len Sims writes:*

Mr. Stansfield is quite correct when he states that the number of claims and objections to registration are now relatively small, and those that are made are dealt with in an efficient and impartial manner. He therefore poses the question 'Is there any point in attending the hearing?'.

I think there is a purpose in attending. If we have done our job there are usually one or two claims sent in, or perhaps objections lodged. In addition our opponents are likely to do the same, and also a few individuals.

It is as well to know just how many claims and objections are lodged with the E.R.O. each year, and how he has dealt with them, especially in respect of non-resident claims.

Then there is another point, to my mind the most important, the fact that you do go along not only indicates the desire to satisfy yourself that everything is all right, but has the added safeguard of preventing the procedure from becoming a purely administrative matter.

Further, the maintenance of a close and friendly relationship with the E.R.O. The time spent with him on registration—even if only to agree with his ruling—is time well spent.

Remember too, your relationship with the E.R.O. is not solely confined to registration, but also to postal voting procedure. Anything that can help combine all these points is well worth the time and trouble.



# DO CHECK ON ABSENT VOTERS

by L. G. SIMS

THE publication of the new Register of Electors on February 15th provides an admirable reason to check on those entered as absent voters, as Electoral Registration Officers have to revise their records.

For instance, all who had claimed to vote by post on account of moving outside the borough, or urban district, or rural parish where registered, have to be deleted. It can also be the time for E.R.O.s to reconsider some of the other claims, and, if necessary, take action.

The reason for this article arises from reports in which it would appear that many claims are open to question. As there is no procedure for objection to such claims (as in the case of inclusion on the Register), the only way in which it can be done is by drawing the attention of the E.R.O. to such cases and hope that he can be satisfied that action is needed.

## DEFINITIONS

In one case it was found that women had been placed on the A.V. list indefinitely on account of their occupation being a 'housewife': the E.R.O. in this case being of the opinion that 'occupation' covered the work of a woman in the house.

Such claims, of course, are really outside the intent if not the strict provisions of the Act. The Home Office Memorandum for the Guidance of Electoral Registration Officers states:

... With regard to applications made on form R.P.F.7 on the ground of the general nature of the applicant's occupation, service or employment, under sections 12 (1) (b) (i) and 23 (1) (b) (i), it would appear that these provisions entitle any elector to be treated as an absent voter if owing to the nature of his calling he is likely to be absent periodically from his home, and would not be able to return home to vote at the polling station at an election held during his absence except by interruption of his normal occupation.

It would be true to say that we have not been inundated with cases, but it

would also be true to say that only a few agents or secretaries have taken the trouble to check the records.

Now what is the position? Briefly it is as follows:

An application to be treated as an absent voter made to the Electoral Registration Officer **shall be allowed by him if he is satisfied** that the application is, or will if registered be, entitled to vote by post.

Those making application on grounds of the 'general nature of the occupation, service, or employment' of the person in question, have only to satisfy the E.R.O.

In the case of 'incapacity', either temporary or permanent, the doctor is required to sign and state the period of the incapacity, and this is usually accepted by the E.R.O.

On 'removals' the Act is quite clear and provides no difficulty in interpretation by the E.R.O.

Should, however, an application be refused, there is provision under section 45 (1) (b) R.P.A. 1949 for the claimant to appeal to the County Court, but, as has been said, there is no provision for anyone to object.

There is, nevertheless, a provision in the Regulations (R.P. Regulations 1950, Regulation 26 (4)) which states that the Registration Officer shall make a copy of the record of absent voters available for inspection at his office. This is an important provision.

## A.V. LISTS

E.R.O.s, quite sensibly, only make out the A.V. lists in readiness for a particular election, and on request being made to inspect the record, give facilities for inspection of the file. Usually this file is comprised of the R.P.F. forms in a card index system.

Where it has been possible to satisfy the E.R.O. that, even if the claim might have been justified at the time of application, it would not now appear to be the case, there is provision for him to send out a notice (R.P.F. 25) to the effect that he, the E.R.O., has reason to believe there has been a material change of circum-

stances and that the person will cease to be treated as an absent voter seven days after the date on which the notice is sent.

If the person considers there are still grounds to be treated as an absent voter, a fresh application has to be made and considered.

Many agents and secretaries will doubtless wish to avail themselves of this facility whereby they can inspect the record. If the request is made in a reasonable manner there is little likelihood of the E.R.O. placing obstacles in the way or refusing to note the observations you may wish to make.

We are convinced that E.R.O.s are as anxious to have their A.V. lists as perfect as possible—as are their Registers of Electors.

Now is the time to make the inspection, as the absent voters lists will have to be compiled for the Local Government elections. It will be time well spent, if only to satisfy yourself that the entries on the absent voters lists are in fact justified.

## New Agents

THE National Executive Committee has recently approved the following agency appointments:

**MISS W. HUARTSON**—as Secretary-Agent for Bristol North. Miss Huartson has been full-time agent at Cheltenham for the past two years. She is 34.

**MR. A. J. HILL**—as Secretary-Agent for Deptford. Mr. Hill is 32 and comes from the East Islington Labour Party, where he has been full-time agent for the past five years.

**MR. W. J. EDWARDES**—as Secretary-Agent for Westbury. Mr. Edwardes held various Party offices before becoming full-time agent at Cambridge in July, 1953. He is 28.

**MISS JOAN MAYNARD**—as Secretary-Agent for Thirsk and Malton. Miss Maynard, who is 33, has held various offices in the Party. For the past year she has been acting as part-time agent at Thirsk and Malton.

## WHO IS THIS MAN?

Who is the worst worked man to-day?  
With haggard look and hair turned grey;  
Who's blamed when things do not go right;

Who gets no rest by day or night?  
Though never having been to college  
He must possess the widest knowledge.  
On rates of pay and hours of labour,  
And how to keep pace with one's neighbour.

Of income tax and how to pay it,  
What's best to say, and when to say it.  
The how and which and why and when  
Of all the problems known to men.

If with Transport House he's agreed,  
He's got no guts or been weak-kneed,  
When for rank and file he tries to cater,  
He's called a b— — agitator.

Who is this chap? What! Don't you know him?

Or how much you really owe him?  
Who keeps the Party hale and hearty,  
Who gets finance from poor and wealthy.  
This chap who works with such intent  
Is, of course, your  
**LABOUR AGENT.**

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**LABOUR'S OWN PAPER**



## Around the Regions

# AN OLD SCOTTISH CUSTOM

FOR each of the last thirty-one years Saltcoats Labour Party has held a celebration supper to commemorate the anniversary of Scotland's bard, Robert Burns.

Puir benighted Sassenachs may be educated, and exiled Scots interested, in the traditional ceremonies, carried through with all the honours of the occasion.

The annual event was first started by the old I.L.P., and year after year orators, poets and musicians, all of them Socialists, come to Saltcoats to take part. Many famous names are associated with the giving of the toast, "The Immortal Memory of Robert Burns". The Orpheus of Scotland, Hugh Robertson; James Maxton; Campbell Stephen; and P. J. Dollan are among the names on the scroll of honour of those who have delivered the oration.

This year, when January blew chill and fierce, the gathering took place in the ancient Town Hall. It was a joyous occasion and meeting of old Socialist friends. "Wi' joy unfeigned brothers and sisters meet, An' each for other's welfare kindly speirs."

The Labour Women's Choir commenced the proceedings with the song, 'Ye Banks and Braes'. With full Heilan honours, the kilted piper with tartan ribbons flying and bagpipes skirling, escorted 'Pooisie Nansie' into the hall. She carried the fragrant haggis, and performed the address. "And then, oh, what a glorious sight, warm, reekin' rich".

The supper was of the old tradition. Tatties and neeps "tumblin' in the boiling flood, wi' kail and beef". Sweets and fruit "wi' sweet milk cheese, in mony a whang, an' farls baked wi' butter".

After the repast, came the chief toast—"The Immortal Memory". The influence of the poet's work on James Keir Hardie was recalled, and how Hardie used the lines of the poet on the window bills which were shown by his supporters: "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn".

So, too, was the incident of the visit to Burns' Memorial Cottage by Louis

Kossuth, the exiled Magyar patriot, who wrote on the visitors' book "Louis Kossuth in exile—to Robert Burns in Immortality".

Part of the tradition is to attach quotations to the names of those taking part in the ceremonies. Modesty is not my strong suit—so I will quote what was written about myself!

*"The friend of man, the friend of truth,  
The friend of age, and guide to youth".*  
The company sang "There was a lad" and obeyed the injunction, "Round and round take up the chorus, and in rapture let us sing."

No Burns festival is complete without tribute to "The Lassies". The Provost led the toast—"Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part, and I my darling Jean". Of course the reply from the Lassies was, "What signifies the life o' man an' 'twere na for the lassies o'".

What I think is the real highlight of the celebration is the tale of "Tam o' Shanter". This was delivered with great gusto—Tam sitting by the fireside, "and at his elbow, Souter Johnnie, his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony; Tam lo'ed him like a verra brither—They had been fu' for weeks thegither"—"Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious; O'er a' the ills o' life victorious."

Rich and reminiscent toasts were drunk to "The Labour Party" and "then each took off his several way, resolved to meet some ither day".

Scottish

W. J. MARSHALL

## P.V. Organiser

AT the consultations with selected constituencies, conducted recently by the Assistant National Agent, it was clearly evident that in not one of these constituencies had any really satisfactory progress been achieved on postal votes.

Some constituencies had made consistent efforts to tackle the question without, however, obtaining the results desired, but others had done little beyond sending out to secretaries a copy of the Head Office booklet. Incidentally, there was general agreement that this booklet is invaluable for key workers.

Two constituencies were given some

months ago the offer of the special grant to assist the temporary appointment of a full-time postal-vote canvasser. Both readily accepted the proposal, but so far have been unable to find anyone prepared to undertake this temporary, full-time work. This seems incredible, but it is true!

It is naturally desirable, if possible, to tackle this question of postal vote applications through the normal voluntary machine of the party, but to be perfectly honest it appears that in most West Midlands constituencies, at least, this is going to be most difficult to achieve.

In some constituencies the agent has given continued emphasis to the problem for two or more years, but little improvement has been effected.

Bromsgrove, a marginal constituency near Birmingham, with a 2,653 Tory majority, has attempted to develop this work, but now realises that a new approach must be followed if the party is to greatly improve on the number of our postal vote applications.

Fortunately, Bromsgrove is reasonably placed financially, and they decided to experiment with a full-time Postal Vote Organiser for an initial period of two and a half months. It so happened that the Honorary Treasurer of the Constituency Party, Councillor Harry Eccles, had recently retired from work and he was appointed to this special task.

Agent Cecil Burrows took the view that adequate preparations should be made before the publication of the new register. His Committee approved and when Councillor Eccles took up his duties on 1st February, it was decided that the first fortnight should be spent in making the necessary contacts in the various areas and building up all relevant information.

Attention is being given to those areas which will be marginal in the forthcoming county council and district council elections. It is intended to cover five wards in Bromsgrove, five in Redditch and two rural parishes.

Each area was asked to arrange a special meeting of the officers and collectors to meet the Postal Vote Organiser. I understand he attended one such meeting every night during the first two weeks.

At these meetings, Councillor Eccles was given full details of the nature of the area; he was given information as to where the Party's older supporters were, and where housing development had taken

place with resultant removals from outside the local government area.

The marked register was available at these meetings showing where the Labour voters were. Also, where available, lists of supporters likely to be qualified for a postal vote were presented.

These initial consultations will prove of the utmost value. It will enable the 'P.V.O.' to better organise his time; and it has brought home to the key officer the importance of this aspect of registration.

Each ward or local party has been asked to arrange a suitable place (generally, this will be a member's house) to be used by the P.V.O. as a headquarters during the period he is at that area. Volunteers are to be encouraged to assist him in the canvass during the evenings. Dates for the campaigns in the different areas have already been determined and publicity given to this information.

It will be noted that whilst Councillor Eccles is to do a great deal of canvassing, he has been styled 'Postal Vote Organiser' and it is intended that he will deal with all aspects of this important work.

Will it be successful? Who can say at this stage. What can be said is that this particular constituency is determined to leave no stone unturned in its efforts to secure an edge on the opposition with regard to postal vote applications. Should Councillor Eccles's work bring results, the Committee will give serious consideration to extending his period of full-time work to other areas.

West Midlands H. R. UNDERHILL

## Local Elections

WE are hoping this year to make a concerted effort to retain our majority on the Nottinghamshire County Council. A County Committee was established in September of last year.

A list of endorsed candidates has been approved by the County Committee. Parties have been asked to submit names of their members who would be willing to fight any electoral areas in the county, and it is hoped by these means to contest seats in areas which have no Local Labour Parties. In conjunction with the Labour Group on the Council a policy statement has been worked out. This has been circulated to all Local Labour Parties and candidates. Notes of the work on the more important committees of the



County Council have also been produced and circulated.

A four-page edition of *Town and Country Post* is being printed and we have been fortunate in having the services of Transport House experts in the production of this. They have visited the county, taken photographs for use in the post and have met the key people on the County Committee to get the background knowledge to 'write up' the material. Later we plan to have a conference of candidates and agents to deal with policy and organisation.

In Kesteven (part of Lincolnshire, if you haven't heard of it), a County Committee has, with the help of a small but active Labour group, worked out a policy on which to fight the elections. All candidates have agreed to use a common election address, with changes, of course, for each candidate. The address will contain the policy statement.

A conference of all candidates has been addressed by the Leader of our County Council Group. Intense efforts have been made to find enough candidates of quality to fight an increased number of seats.

In Northamptonshire, plans are also in hand for a common election address and poll card. In this county, too, active steps have been taken to secure more candidates and it looks as if we shall, as a result, fight a larger number of seats than on previous occasions.

In Rutland, too, it looks as if we shall fight a small number of seats. If this happens it will be the first occasion on which Labour has had official candidates in the field.

East Midlands J. CATTERMOLÉ

## New Parties

**F**OLLOWING the approval of Orders in connection with the Report of the Boundary Commissions, a disproportionate part of the time of the regional staff in the North-West has been spent, and will be spent during the next two months, in reorganising Constituency Labour Parties.

In this region, two constituencies have been abolished and one entirely new constituency created. In addition, 23 constituencies have been so altered as to necessitate the disbanding of the old Constituency Labour Parties and the establishment of new organisations. Minor

changes have been made in another 11 constituencies.

The constituencies abolished were one of the two Blackburn seats and the Droylsden constituency. In the case of Blackburn the Commission's argument, based on figures, was sound; for, as the Report says, the electorate of the borough had fallen to only just over 80,000. Taking the borough with the neighbouring constituency of Darwen, with only just over 40,000 electors, two new constituencies emerge with reasonable electoral quotas.

In the case of Droylsden, the Report significantly omits any mention of electorate, for here a constituency with nearly 60,000 electors is abolished, despite the protests of all the local authorities, political parties, and others concerned.

Further, as in the case of Blackburn, the Commission has violated its own aim, for it has cut across local government boundaries.

However, justified or not, the deed is done, and with appropriate motions of thanks and appreciation in the one case to the Member of Parliament and in the other to the prospective candidate, the funeral ceremonies have been held and the parties decently buried.

The christening of the new Nantwich constituency has taken place, although no one at the inaugural meeting of the new Nantwich Constituency Labour Party could find any good reason for its birth.

Carved out of the surrounding county constituencies, it has an electorate of only 42,497 and by its creation the three neighbouring seats have electorates of only 43,000, 49,000, and 51,000. Furthermore, the Commission's aim of not cutting across local government boundaries has been violated in almost incredible fashion, for in addition to three urban districts the constituency includes PARTS of three rural districts, parishes of which have been used like pawns in a game of chess.

In the other 23 constituencies good progress is being made. The breaking of old associations is causing many a heartbreak, and an eagle eye will need to be kept on some places to secure the observance of the Residential Rule.

Disbanding, re-forming or forming goes on apace, and soon we hope that in these new constituencies, as in the old, Labour will be ready to make its contribution to another Government with power.

North Western

R. C. WALLIS

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